Selling Global Seoul: Competitive Urban Policy and Symbolic Reconstruction of Cities

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Abstract
The paper focuses on a process of symbolic reconstruction of cities, where existing image or meaning of places is purposely changed with an aim to attract new investments, events or tourists to a particular city. Process of symbolic reconstruction is situated within the context of growing competition among cities. Symbolic reconstruction also affects tourism development in cities as it provides an easily marketed and consumable image and meaning of places. The case of Cheonggyecheon restoration in Seoul helps to understand how symbolic reconstruction of cities is related to and affected by competitive urban policy of cities, urban renewal and city marketing. Observing local consequences it is possible to conclude that while the restoration and resulting symbolic reconstruction helped Cheonggyecheon to become the major tourist attraction and icon of global Seoul, it also resulted in decline of local places and cultures, contradicting in this way its initial goals.

Keywords: Cheonggyecheon, city marketing, Seoul, symbolic reconstruction, tourism, urban policy.

Introduction

Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is one of the world's largest cities. Combined with the entire metropolitan region it is home to more than 22 million residents, which accounts for almost half of the South Korean population. While the city is internationally praised as the "Miracle on the Han River" for its rapid economic growth and urban development in the past, it is still largely overlooked that Seoul is recently quickly expanding its cultural industry and becoming one of the top tourist destinations in East Asia. Nearly nine million foreign visitors came to Seoul last year and the impact of tourism on the economic growth, social structure and urban development is growing. The metropolitan government seems to be well aware of the opportunities that tourism development brings to the city and designated tourism industry as one of the six growth engines that are expected to transform Seoul into a clean and attractive global city. Although there is a growing interest about Seoul in the field of urban studies, including urban planning and architecture, little research was done on Seoul as an emerging tourist destination. The growing impact of tourism on urban policy and its diverse consequences for the everyday life in Seoul remain so far rather unacknowledged.

The paper focuses on urban renewal and city marketing as instruments of urban policy in Seoul, by which the metropolitan government tries to improve economic competitiveness and global appeal of the city. Urban renewal and city marketing are at the same time expected to boost tourism in Seoul. The urban policy of the metropolitan government used to be based on an assumption that the global position of city can be significantly improved by efficient management and marketing of its strategic resources, which can eventually result in economic growth, urban development and higher quality of everyday life (SDI, 2003; OECD, 2005). Yet urban renewal and city marketing also result in what we call *symbolic reconstruction of cities*, whereby the existing image or meaning of a particular place is purposely changed in order to attract new investments, events and tourists to the city. We suggest that symbolic reconstruction of cities, also referred to as re-signification or re-imaging of cities, offers a required conceptual framework, which allows us to study the relation between urban renewal and city

marketing as instruments of urban policy in general and tourism development in particular against the backdrop of growing competition among cities (Balibrea, 2001; Smith, 2005).

The paper takes *Cheonggyecheon restoration* as a case to study the relation between urban policy, urban renewal and city marketing. During the restoration an ageing highway, crossing downtown Seoul, was torn down and ancient stream was restored on its site, transforming the it into one of the most popular places in the city. The case allows us to study the consequences of urban renewal and city marketing on the everyday life and tourism development in Seoul. Yet the Cheonggyecheon restoration not only transformed downtown Seoul but also changed its image and meaning. Symbolic reconstruction, which resulted from the restoration, was to a large extent related to aggressive city marketing of the metropolitan government. Although the Cheonggyecheon restoration positively affected the quality of everyday life and boosted tourism in Seoul, it also resulted in ongoing gentrification, decline of traditional industrial and service sectors and disappearance of local places and cultures. We argue that undesirable outcomes of the Cheonggyecheon restoration can be attributed to its instrumentalisation for particular economic and political interests and contradict the initial strategic goals of restoration.

Cities Competing Globally, Whatever it Costs

Globalization of cities is often seen as a one-way process, where success or failure of a particular city depends entirely on global conditions that are supposedly beyond local control. While it is obvious that structural transformation of global economy, increasing cultural and political integration on cross-national scale, and informatization of societies affect cities around the world, such a view nevertheless fails to account that cities are not merely places where global flows of capital, goods and cultures are localized. Cities are the engines of global economy and reproduce the global order as much as they are affected by it (Sassen, 2001). Due to structural changes of the global economy and economic and political changes inside national states cities are forced to offer substantial financial, administrative or other incentives in order to attract global capital to a particular place. Attracting mobile capital is often believed to be a precondition for a faster local economic growth and urban development. Cities are thus becoming increasingly autonomous economic and political agents that actively respond to pressures and opportunities of globalization. Consequently it is the urban policy of cities, and not the global forces outside them, which is the main source of social and economic change in cites today. (Smith, 2002; Short, 2004).

Competition of cities affects their urban policy, which is becoming increasingly competitive and generally based on two assumptions. On one hand competitive urban policy assumes that a city can improve its position against rival cities by implementing efficient management of strategic resources and assets. On the other hand a city also needs to be efficiently marketed to make potential investors and visitors aware of its comparative advantages. City marketing thus became an integral part of competitive urban policy and large financial and human resources are invested to promote a city as supposedly the most attractive business environment, place of the finest quality of life or the most desired tourist destination (Smith, 2005). By attracting foreign investments, transnational corporations, international events and tourists, a city is expected to benefit from resulting economic growth, new jobs, urban development and better quality of everyday life. Many local governments even believe that a city can face a risk of economic and social decline if the city marketing fails short of anticipated results (Short, 1998). Yet there is little evidence that competitive urban policy leads to a faster long-term economic growth or just and sustainable urban development equally beneficial for different social groups. There is on contrary a growing body of evidence suggesting that the benefits of economic growth are distributed in a noticeably uneven way (Smith, 2002; Perrons, 2004). While it is true that competitive urban policy eventually results in construction of new public spaces, social amenities, infrastructure, and regenerated neighbourhoods, the long-term benefits of faster economic growth, generated by successful city marketing, often stay in the hands of a small political elite and private developers, known as “growth coalitions” (Logan and Molotch, 2007). Harvey (1989: 4) showed that the only certain short-term outcome of what he calls a “shift to entrepreneurialism in urban governance” are uneven capital accumulation, speculative urban development,

instrumentalisation of public-private partnerships, dominance of economic interests in urban management, and declining social and spatial cohesion in cities.

During the last two decades city marketing gained a lot of attention as an instrument of competitive urban policy (Smith, 2005). City marketing implements strategic goals of local government, which in many cases focuses on promoting economic competitiveness of a city, enhancing its international image, attracting new investments, events or tourists, and improving the quality of everyday life. One of its main goals is "to construct a new image of the city to replace either vague or negative images previously held by current or potential residents, investors and visitors" (Holcomb, 1993: 133). In this sense selling a city is no different than selling any other product. Cities are therefore becoming increasingly commodified and the emphasis is less on promoting the actual qualities of a place than on selling its image. City marketing strategies range from a conventional tools like dissemination of appealing slogans and logos to more sophisticated approaches, which integrate organization of important international events, conventions, construction of iconic urban projects and city branding. Although such practices vary in terms of scale and scope they nevertheless aim to reconstruct the image and meaning of a particular place, what we refer to as the *symbolic reconstruction of cities*.[1]

Yet by reconstructing the meaning of a place city marketing not only promotes its qualities but also legitimates interests of dominant economic or political groups. New meanings promoted by city marketing "are not innocent of social authority and political power. The city is written from a particular perspective for a particular audience" (Short, 1998: 74). Cities try to show themselves as safe and friendly places with no conflicts, while existing environmental degradation or social injustice are rarely addressed and intentionally ignored. The potential allusion to the conflictive past that a place may invoke has to be reconstructed to the extent that "the end product loses its capacity to refer to a memory of capitalist exploitation and of the role that this exploitation has played in the city's current prosperity" (Balibrea, 2001: 190). Social groups and individuals that do not fit or oppose the symbolic reconstruction of a particular place are marginalised or even excluded from the public life. Symbolic reconstruction of cities as an instrument of competitive urban policy thus serves as a new form of social and political domination and affects growing social polarization and denied political rights in cities (Balibrea, 2001; Cho, 2010).

As one of the fastest growing global industries tourism affects urban change and is seen as one of the new growth sectors in cities. At the same time tourism development directly benefits from successful city marketing and resulting symbolic reconstruction of cities (Short, 2004). Aggressive city marketing attracts new tourists, what in consequence supposedly affects the local economic growth and urban development. Symbolic reconstruction plays in this case a rather important role since it provides easily consumable images and appealing meanings of a place following market trends in tourism industry. Tourists namely tend to reduce their experience of place they visit to a "limited number of experiences" and demand a "coherent representation and meaning of a city, one that is easy and pleasant to consume" (Balibrea, 2001: 189). City marketing alone has on the other hand a limited success unless it is followed by actual transformation of a city. Many cities therefore construct iconic flagship projects or implement large-scale urban renewal strategies, which aim to replace traditional and seemingly rundown urban areas with new places of global spectacle and tend to transform the former into non-conflicting tourist attractions of mass consumption. Such urban development commodifies cities and transforms them into a spectacle for tourists deprived of historic authenticity and meaning (Urry, 2002). For residents tourism development may eventually generate new jobs and improve environmental or living conditions, but it can also lead to gentrification, social segregation, community disintegration or decline of local places and cultures (Smith, 2002; Križnik, 2009a).

[1] Balibrea (2001: 189) refers to symbolic reconstruction as a process of "resignifying the city", while Smith (2005: 403) talks about "re-imaging" of cities by means of connotations. Much of recent debate on symbolic reconstruction is focused on Barcelona, which has changed over the past three decades from a relatively unknown regional centre into one of the most successful European cities. Symbolic reconstruction was instrumental for the profound and successful transformation of the city (Balibrea, 2001; Smith, 2005).

Now we want to turn our attention away from a general discussion on globalization and cities and focus on urban policy in Seoul in order to see, how urban renewal and city marketing transform it into one of the leading cities and a top tourist destination in the world. In particular we want to focus on the Cheonggyecheon restoration, the most known urban renewal project in Seoul, in order to uncover some of the consequences, which the restoration and resulting symbolic reconstruction have on everyday life and tourism development in the city.

Seoul, a Clean and Attractive Global City

Seoul adopted an increasingly competitive urban policy during the last decade as the metropolitan government tried to challenge relatively low structural position of the city in the global economy (Križnik, 2009b). While New York, London and Tokyo are recognized for having dominant position in the global economy, Seoul used to take a position of what Taylor (2004: 160) calls a "wannabe world city." According to Taylor (2004) cities, subordinated to those already having a dominant role, are facing stronger economic and political pressures caused by their drive to improve existing global ranks.[2] In Seoul global pressures seem to be further accentuated by its overwhelming position in the national urban system and by a vast concentration of financial and human resources in the metropolitan region (Choe, 1998). Several studies also show that the lower global rank of Seoul was not only a consequence of its global position but also of its urban development in the past (SDI, 2003; OECD, 2005). Metropolitan government had limited control over the city and paid little attention to the negative environmental and social outcomes of the rapid economic growth and urban development. At the same time Seoul possesses natural and cultural heritage that is, unlike in other cities, exceptionally well located and is an important resource for tourism development. While the residents benefit form it, the OECD (2005) study found that the rich natural and cultural heritage used to be poorly marketed, invisible for tourists, and had a limited influence on economic competitiveness and global appeal of the city. The study recommended "in order to continue to play the role of national economic leader and reinforce its international competitiveness, Seoul must attend to improvements in its spatial development, urban environment and quality of life" (OECD 2005: 59).

Rich natural and cultural heritage is therefore an important asset for tourism development in Seoul. Along with financial services, digital content, ICT, biotechnical, design and fashion industry the metropolitan government designated tourism and convention industry as one of the "six new growth engines", which are expected to transform Seoul into a "clean and attractive global city" (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2006: 26). The impact of tourism industry in Seoul is growing. In 2010 almost nine million visitors arrived to Seoul, less though than the ambitious goal set by the metropolitan government, which wants to see twelve million visitors a year. However, while Seoul was virtually unknown as a tourist destination two decades ago, it has meanwhile become one of the most popular cities to visit in East Asia.[3] The city also serves as the gateway for the vast majority of foreign visitors coming to Korea. In comparison to Barcelona, which is by many considered as a top tourist destination, Seoul displays similar growth of visitors during the last decade (Table 1). Due to the growing economic importance of tourism industry the metropolitan government is investing substantial financial and human resources in the city marketing and promotion of Seoul as tourist destination.[4] City marketing used to be considered as one of the three main strategies that the

[2] Taylor (2004: 73) ranks Seoul as the 41st in a classification, based on a network analysis of global producer services. Recent studies however reveal a growing economic and political importance of Seoul in the global economy. Global Power City Index 2011 lists Seoul as the 7th among surveyed cities for its "comprehensive power to attract creative people and excellent companies from around the world amidst accelerated interurban competition" (Mori Memorial Foundation, 2011).

[3] For the three consecutive years Seoul was selected as the most wanted city to visit in a survey, which AC Nielsen conducts in China, Japan and Thailand (Lee, 2011).

[4] Foreign visitors to Seoul spent about 3,2 billion EUR during the first five months in 2011, 9% more than the year before. Related industries accordingly benefited in about 8,3 billion EUR (Lee, 2011). If the trend continues the tourism industry in Seoul may generate an income of more than 20 billion EUR this year. In 2010 the metropolitan government's spending on tourism and culture accounted for almost 550 million EUR, which accounts for 3,6% of the total municipal budget (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2011: 552).

metropolitan government has to implement "in order to attract more foreign tourists and foreign direct investment" (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2006: 15). Marketing campaigns are particularly focused on the neighbouring countries, which represent the main market for tourism industry in Seoul due to their geographic proximity and cultural similarities (Lee, 2011). Important source of tourism development in Seoul is also the expansion of convention tourism. Seoul ranked as the 5th among the most important "international meeting cities in 2010" (UIA, 2011).

Table 1. Visitors to Seoul and Barcelona from 2000 to 2010.

	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
Seoul	5.321.792	5.347.468	5.818.138	6.155.046	6.890.841	8.797.658
Barcelona	3.141.162	3.580.986	4.549.587	6.709.175	6.659.075	7.133.524

Source: Barcelona Turisme (2011:7), Seoul Metropolitan Government (2011:346).

Growth of tourism directly affects urban development in Seoul. The metropolitan government's plan to transform Seoul in a competitive and attractive global city is focused on integration of tourism development with the "revitalization of downtown Seoul as a center for economy and tourism" and seemingly necessary development of what is called "tourist attractions with global competitiveness" (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2006: 26). The ongoing transformation of downtown Seoul includes the new Gwanghwamun Square, connecting the ancient Gyeongbokgung palace with the Namdaemun gate, development of special tourism zones in Myeongdong, Insadong, and Cheonggyecheon, planned green corridor between the Jongmyo royal shrine and Namsan mountain and the ongoing construction of iconic Dongdaemun Design Plaza. Next to the transformation of downtown, the metropolitan government also introduced an ambitious large-scale urban renewal initiative New Town Development, which was expected to address existing imbalances in economic growth and urban development between different parts of the city and thus improve the quality of life in Seoul (Križnik, 2009b). The most successful urban renewal project in terms of long-term impact on the economic growth and urban development in Seoul as well as anticipated expansion of tourism is nonetheless the *Cheonggyecheon restoration*, which we will discuss in detail later on.

Image 1. Symbolic reconstruction of Seoul: Coexistence of traditional and global.

Source: Seoul Metropolitan Government (2006:81), Seoul Selection (2006:66).

The image and meaning of Seoul are recently reconstructed, mainly with an aim to improve the global appeal of the city. The symbolic reconstruction in Seoul seems to follow two dominant narratives, which are frequently used in marketing campaigns and reproduced in various forms and media,

addressing domestic and foreign residents, investors or tourists. One narrative focuses on the so-called "royal Seoul", while the other talks about a "breathtaking Seoul" (Seoul Tourist Organization, 2009). The narrative on royal Seoul finds its references in historic palaces and temples, the old city wall and gates, remaining traditional villages, and the landscape surrounding the city. Long and rich cultural tradition of Korea, which the narrative refers to, makes it possible to distinct Seoul from other rival cities in East Asia. The glorious tradition of royal Seoul is used at the same time to legitimize the other dominant narrative on so-called breathtaking global Seoul, which is presented as having its sources in the "ancient capital" and " dynamic and emerging global metropolis" at the same time (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2005: 103). City marketing thus tries to relate the image and meaning of traditional places to those of the global spectacle in order to construct a distinct yet easily consumable image of Seoul (Image 1).[5] Recent urban renewal projects in downtown Seoul, such as Cheonggyecheon restoration, Gwanghwamun Plaza or Dongdaemun Design Plaza, are portrayed as places of Korean tradition on one hand, while showing ambitions of global Seoul on the other.

Symbolic reconstruction, where the ancient tradition is used to legitimize the cosmopolitan future, aims to boost tourism development in Seoul. Though sometimes different in form and media, the marketing campaigns promoting the royal and breathtaking Seoul refer to narratives, which praise the city for harmonious coexistence of traditional and global. They create a distinct image and meaning of Seoul, one that is easily recognizable, marketed and consumed. Combination of traditional and global references constructs an imaginary representation of a "clean and attractive global city", which originates in the rich natural and cultural heritage. In order to study symbolic reconstruction in Seoul, its relation to the urban renewal, and some of the consequences, which it has on everyday life and on tourism development in the city, we focus on the Cheonggyecheon restoration.

Instrumentalisation of the Cheonggyecheon Restoration?

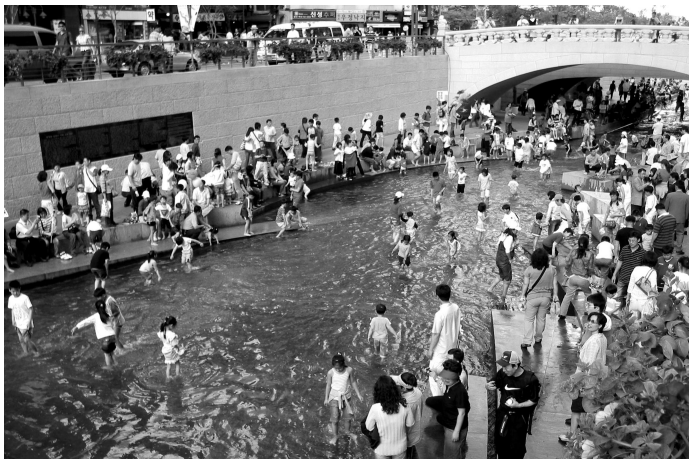
Cheonggyecheon restoration draws a lot of attention in Korea and abroad for its innovative approach. In 2002 the metropolitan government announced an ambitious plan to demolish the ageing highway in downtown Seoul and restore an ancient stream on the site. The restoration was successfully completed in 2005, only two years and three months after it started. Anticipated results of the Cheonggyecheon restoration were multiple. Seoul Metropolitan Government (2005) wanted to improve environmental and living conditions in downtown Seoul, resolve disparities in development between northern and southern part of the city, recover natural and cultural heritage, create new public spaces and amenities, increase traffic safety and boost tourism development in the area. Many goals of the restoration are already achieved. Environmental and living conditions in the area improved considerably, while residents enjoy new public spaces and attend variety of cultural venues and bustling commercial activities (Image 2). At the same time the Cheonggyecheon restoration also has an important strategic role as an instrument of urban policy, by which the metropolitan government tries to improve economic competitiveness and global appeal of the city. The former Seoul mayor Lee left no doubt about strategic goals of the restoration, when he stated, "once the stream is restored, we want this area to stand out as a center of foreign investment. The ultimate goal is to make Seoul a great city, one that can compete as an attractive center of business with Shanghai, Tokyo and Beijing" (quoted in Kane, 2003). In this sense the restoration has to be seen not only as an urban renewal project that tries to improve quality of everyday life and boost tourism development in downtown Seoul but also as an initiative that wants to put into practice the competitive urban policy (Križnik, 2009b).

Although the Cheonggyecheon restoration in general positively affects environmental and living conditions in downtown Seoul its less desired outcomes became evident recently. It seems that the project was initially narrowly focused on the restoration of stream alone and did not provide a long-term urban plan to address diverse consequences of such large-scale urban renewal (Cho, 2010). Land

[5] The two posters promoting the city show a traditional Korean landscape painting and royal palaces surrounded with Cheonggyecheon, Seoul Tower, COEX and Teheranno skyline. The posters read "A true convention city Seoul, Where modernity and tradition exists in harmony" and "Refresh your Soul in Seoul, Experience the excitement of the city where nature, culture and technology flourish..."

values in the area significantly increased after the restoration and many old neighbourhoods, such as Hwanghak, Wangsimni or Sinseol, become places of land speculation and intensive urban redevelopment. A number of high-rise office and residential projects are currently under way along Cheonggyecheon, often completely out of scale and with no meaningful relation to the places nearby. Such unrestricted urban development not only has a negative impact on the urban landscape, but also significantly changes the existing social structure and economic organization of the area (Križnik, 2009b). Private urban development, which benefits from the restoration, namely pays little if any attention to existing economic and social complexity of the affected areas. Growing living costs caused by the restoration are forcing many merchants and residents to leave the area. The ongoing gentrification, resulting from the loosely controlled private development, can be at least partly attributed to the Cheonggyecheon restoration. In a similar manner the restoration affects the local economy. While some industrial or service sectors are flourishing, traditional jobs are in decline. Places that used to play an important role for reproduction of local economy and everyday life are about to disappear, while many small workshops and shops are closing down their business.[6]

Image 2. Cheonggyecheon as new public space and tourist attraction in downtown Seoul.



Source: Križnik (2009b:125).

Cheonggyecheon restoration also affects economy and tourism in Seoul. The OECD (2005: 102) study expected that the restoration "can serve as a flagship project showing to the international community Seoul's dedication in building a lively urban landscape. If the project is closely connected to a cultural booming, it could become a major touristic asset for Seoul's international image." After its opening the stream in fact became one of the major tourist attractions in the city and more than 120 million visitors reportedly visited Cheonggyecheon by now with 20% of them being foreigners (Table 2). Although Cheonggyecheon still lags behind the most popular places in Seoul like Myeongdong or Dongdaemun, which are visited by more than half of all foreign visitors, we have to notice that Myeongdong and Dongdaemun are two of the most important shopping areas in the city. Compared to historic and cultural sites similar to Cheonggyecheon, such as Insadong for example, the number of foreign visitors to both is rather similar. Due to the growing number of visitors the Cheonggyecheon restoration positively affects tourism in downtown Seoul and generates new jobs in the area, which was once known for its small industrial workshops and local markets. To support tourism development the metropolitan government designated Cheonggyecheon as a special tourism zone and built facilities like Cheonggyecheon Museum and Seoul Folk Flea Market nearby the stream. The iconic

[6] There used to be 60.000 shops employing about 800.000 workers along Cheonggyecheon (Cho, 2010). Yet the Cheonggyecheon flea market, one of the largest in Seoul, virtually disappeared after the restoration. The metropolitan government was aware of negative consequences that the restoration may have on the local markets and allowed some street vendors to relocate to the Dongdaemun stadium after the restoration started. The majority of street vendors had to leave to other parts of Seoul or lose their jobs. Dongdaemun stadium was also demolished and the remaining street vendors had to relocate again. Today there are about 700 street vendors left in the Seoul Folk Flea Market, which shows a vast impact of large-scale urban renewal on local economy.

Dongdaemun Design Plaza, which the metropolitan government expects to become a "global fashion hub" and the new icon of Seoul, will also directly benefit from the transformation triggered by the Cheonggyecheon restoration (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2006: 75).

Table 2. Foreign visitors to major tourist attractions in Seoul in 2006 and 2010.[7]

	Myeongdong	Dongdaemun	Old palaces	Insadong	Cheonggyecheon
2006	51,4 %	48,5 %	42,9 %	26,6 %	12,7 %
2010	66,7 %	56,4 %	44,0 %	32,2 %	19,8 %

Source: Korea Tourism Organization (2007: 107), Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (2011: 128).

Urban renewal is rarely only a matter of transforming a particular place. It is also about its interpretation and outcome. The narratives giving meaning to places affected by urban renewal namely also legitimize its anticipated goals. Dominant social and political actors try to impose in this way their particular interpretation, which sometimes stands in a strong contrast with the traditional meaning of those places. Symbolic reconstruction of cities is therefore inherently a contested process, where different actors attach opposing meanings to a particular place. Cheonggyecheon restoration is no exception in this sense. However in the case of Cheonggyecheon the traditional meaning of the stream was already lost long time ago, when the stream was covered with a road and later with the elevated highway. Little if any historic references for the Cheonggyecheon restoration actually existed before its construction, neither in terms of its image nor meaning. Cho (2010: 151) hence points out that if the stream "was to be restored, it either had to be reinvented or reconstructed in the urban context of global Seoul. This meant that natural Cheonggyecheon was to be discursively created..." The dominant group, which most directly affected the Cheonggyecheon restoration and its interpretation, favoured a rapid process, which the Seoul mayor Lee saw as an opportunity to improve economic competitiveness and global appeal of the city. At the same time a rapid and successful restoration process was also expected to demonstrate his management competence and strengthen his political position. The planned restoration of the stream and its interpretation was thus to a great deal utilized to support mayor Lee's political interests. The environmental and cultural civic organizations and merchant's associations opposed the undemocratic process led by the metropolitan government. Yet while the merchant's associations protected their private interests, the environmental and cultural organizations struggled for a more democratic restoration process and criticised the lacking "ecological and historical authenticity" of the stream (Cho, 2010: 162).

The interests of the dominant actors eventually prevailed over the concerns of civic society. More than on a careful restoration of natural environment and cultural heritage the metropolitan government focused on construction of iconic place of global spectacle, which lacks authentic meaning.[8] Cho (2010: 160) thus describes Cheonggyecheon as a "public park decorated to the theme of nature." At the same time such approach of the metropolitan government also rewrites the meaning of Cheonggyecheon and image of the city. Reports in foreign media for example show that restoration successfully challenged unfavourable international perception of Seoul as an "urban concrete jungle" (Walsh, 2006). The Cheonggyecheon restoration thus not only recovered natural and cultural heritage or improved the quality of everyday life in Seoul, but was also used to reimage the city and sell it as a "clean and attractive global city" (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2006). While environmental and historic importance of the restoration was well presented to the public, the strategic goals were on contrary hidden by narratives representing Cheonggyecheon as the "new face of Seoul" and "hope for

[7] A survey, conducted monthly over the year, included 8.123 foreign visitors in 2006 and 9.631 foreign visitors in 2010. They were asked about places, which they visited during their stay in Seoul.

[8] Rather than for a long-term gradual restoration of the entire Cheonggyecheon water basin and its ecology, which could allow for a sufficient natural water inflow, the metropolitan government decided to supply the water for the stream by pumping it from a nearby water-treatment facility. Costly water pumping does not seem to have much in common with supposedly ecological restoration of Cheonggyecheon (Cho, 2010).

the Seoul citizens." Seoul Metropolitan Government (2005: 105) promoted the restoration as "a greater task that the entire nation is interested in as a symbolic project to revive an important part of Korea's historical and natural heritage at the start of the 21st century".

Narratives about national interests, supposedly related to the restoration, were used to legitimize competitive urban policy and particular economic and political interests of the metropolitan government (Ryu, 2004; Cho, 2010). For those reasons Cheonggyecheon is portrayed as a place, where the heritage of the ancient Hanseong coexists with the global Seoul (Image 1). However, not every bits of history fits the desired image and meaning of global Seoul. While the traditional heritage and cosmopolitan future are used as sources of imagination and representation of things to come, the historic legacy of industrialization, symbolized by once heroic and now demolished Cheonggye Expressway, did not fit the desired image of global Seoul. The then assistant mayor of the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project Headquarters Yang stated clearly that by "liquidating the unsightly legacy from Korea's developmental period and restoring the city's natural environment, Seoul can be ready to emerge as a cultural metropolis where tradition and modernity are harmoniously blended with each other" (quoted in Weolgan Hwangyeong, 2004). Many local places and cultures along Cheonggyecheon that once gave rise to the rapid development and prosperity of Seoul were literally deconstructed and forgotten during the restoration process. Cheonggyecheon restoration thus rather strongly affected the symbolic reconstruction of the city. The dominant narratives legitimizing and promoting the restoration not only changed the meaning of the city, but also rewrote the history of area from a particular view favoured by the metropolitan government. Due to such instrumentalisation the narratives interpreting the Cheonggyecheon restoration seems to have largely overlooked or even ignored the traditional image and meaning of the area for local residents.

Conclusion: Symbolic Reconstruction of Cities and its Contradictions

We tried to understand symbolic reconstruction of cities and situate it within the context of growing competition among cities, which is increasingly affecting their urban policy and everyday life. Competitive urban policy assumes that the position of a city in global economy can be improved by efficient management and marketing of its strategic resources and eventually leads to economic growth, urban development and higher quality of everyday life. Symbolic reconstruction of cities can be described as an outcome of competitive urban policy, where existing image or meaning of places is purposely changed to attract new investments, events or tourists to a city. The result is an easily marketed and consumable image or meaning of places. Symbolic reconstruction of cities however should not be seen as a formal instrument of urban policy. Rather it is a conceptual framework, which allows us to understand the relation between urban policy on one hand and urban renewal and city marketing on the other. The later are namely gaining a lot of attention as instruments of competitive urban policy aiming to boost tourism development in a city.

The paper discusses the Cheonggyecheon restoration in order to understand how symbolic reconstruction of a city is related to and affected by competitive urban policy, urban renewal and city marketing in Seoul. The restoration of the ancient stream considerably improved the area along Cheonggyecheon in several ways and has a growing impact on the tourism development in the city. The stream became one of the major tourists attractions and the icon of global Seoul. At the same time Cheonggyecheon became to play an important role as a part of aggressive city marketing, which successfully challenges the international perception of Seoul as an emerging tourist destination. The image and meaning of Cheonggyecheon is hence rewritten form a particular perspective, which praises the stream and the city for what is marketed as a unique coexistence of traditional and global. At the same time the instrumentalisation of the Cheonggyecheon restoration to improve the economic competitiveness and global appeal of the city seems to result in undesired outcomes like the ongoing gentrification, decline of traditional industrial and service sectors and disappearance of local places and cultures in the areas affected by urban renewal. Transformation of traditional flea markets or demolition of industrial neighbourhoods along Cheonggyecheon illustrate how local places and cultures, once characteristic for the area, are replaced by global spectacle that can be easily found in other tourist destinations. The resulting symbolic reconstruction of the city negatively affects

localities, which could otherwise become an important asset for tourism development. Such outcomes contradict the strategic aims of urban policy, which wants to boost tourism development in the city, and may eventually prevail over the benefits of restoration for tourism and everyday life in Seoul.

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